

Singer/Songwriter Jack Ingram: Having it his way and doing good things

Written by BY TERRY MATHEWS, NEWS-TELEGRAM ARTS EDITOR
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Just so there's no misunderstanding: Jack Ingram is a man in charge. He calls the shots in his career, his life and he decides how he will pay it forward.

Lucky for us that he wanted to return to Northeast Texas Saturday night for Rally 'Round Greenville.

The weekend kicks off with a Friday night street dance featuring performances by Bad Moon Rising at 6 p.m. and Emerald City Band at 8 p.m.

There will be free music all day Saturday on the Bud Light Stage in the courthouse square, including Lou Ann Petty, Josh Davis as Elvis, and Shake, Rattle and Roll.

Ingram is scheduled to take the stage Saturday night at 10 p.m.

The Woodlands native began his songwriting and singing career while enrolled at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. He played in bars and opened for Mark Chestnut. In 2008, he was named the Academy of Country Music's Top New Male Vocalist.

He's released seven studio records and five live albums. He had collaborated with other artists and lent his voice to "Stuff That Works," on the 2012 2-CD Guy Clark Tribute release.

His 2005 single, "Wherever You Are," topped the US country charts, while other singles including "Love You," "Measure of a Man," "Free" and "Barefoot and Crazy" also charted.

Control was always important to Ingram. He said he could never move to Nashville, choosing to settle in Austin.

A while back, Ingram chose to cut back the number of gigs he accepts – although he is still out on the road over 100 nights a year – and has instead taken on weekly voiceover work for radio stations. He hasn't cut a record in a couple of years.

"I decided that I was going to take the shows I wanted to play," he explained as he was driving to a station for his weekly stint. "It made sense to me not to go out and beat my head against the wall unless I had something new to talk about."

Right now, Ingram is comfortable with his place in the music business.

"If you like my music, fantastic," he explained. "Dude, come on in and be part of it."

But if his work isn't your cup of tea, he really doesn't care.

"My music is cool to me and to the people who like it," he said. "If it's not cool to you, go find whatever makes you happy."

What's been making Ingram happy for a while is doing weekly voiceover gigs for radio stations across the nation.

"I like it," he said with a laugh. "Yes. I like it."

A while back, someone asked him if he would do voice work at a local station.

"He loved it and paid me money to do it," Ingram marveled. "Wow."

Word got out and others called with requests.

"For a couple of years, it's been growing and growing," he noted. "I go in once a week. I don't have to pretend. I don't even have a big 'radio' voice. I just talk the way I talk. I read the lines they put in front of me. And, I don't have to write them."

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It's a good weekly gig. He's currently doing voice imaging work for WSIX-FM in Nashville, WMIL-FM in Milwaukee, KWJJ-FM in Portland, Ore. and KSCS in Dallas.

In April, Ingram took on a project that had been percolating for several years.

He teamed up with University of Texas coach Mack Brown and actor Matthew McConaughey, a Longview native, to create "Mack, Jack and McConaughey," a fundraiser for children's charity.

"It was awesome," he said of the event that included a golf tournament, gala, fashion show and two nights of music. "We raised almost a million dollars."

Ingram said he had wanted to do a golf tournament similar to the one Willie Nelson and Darryl Royal did in Austin and combine it with some music. However, he had specific ideas about the kind of music he wanted to showcase. He didn't want the project to be a dinner, band and auction.

"I do a lot of charity work for other people," he noted. "After doing that for so long, I just wanted to do something I could build."

Brown and McConaughey were also involved in charity work and were looking to consolidate their efforts.

"I knew when I stepped off the cliff that I really wanted the parachute to open," he explained of the new effort. "When I asked Mack to do it and he asked McConaughey, we all got together and planned it out."

For entertainment, Ingram wanted fellow singer/songwriters in the spotlight, but knew they needed a big name to perform on the first night. John Mellencamp was booked for the gig.

"Everybody rocked out and had a ball," he noted. "Mellencamp was great."

In order to get singer/songwriters on the bill, Ingram made a promise to his partners and deep pocket donors.

He told them, "You let me do this. If I'm wrong, we can do it your way next year."

He had it his way. Kris Kristofferson, Guy Clark, Todd Snider, Bruce Robinson and Radney Foster were featured.

"Sure enough, the crowd was wowed," Ingram explained.

Hopefully, "Mack, Jack and McConaughey" will become an annual event. It's good for children's charities and it's good for singer/songwriters.

In the meantime, Ingram plans to go back into the recording studio this fall. One thing's for sure, the music will be pure Jack Ingram. And that's a good thing.

In addition to Friday's Street Dance and Saturday's free concerts, Rally 'Round Greenville weekend events include a barbecue cookoff, food vendors, a kids stage on Saturday, featuring GISD drum line, Dance Prodigy, Phoenix Charter School, Studio A Dance Company, Creative Arts Community, Reaktlon, Matt Dunn, October 5th Band, Academy of Dance, Music and Theater and Kyle Wacasy.

Sunday's Bud Light Stage roster includes Shund, Alloy, Drag the Waters and Tamra Martinez.

For more information, check out Rally 'Round Greenville's Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Rally-Round-Greenville/131455433567514>

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Click [here](#) for a clip of Jack Ingram and Miranda Lambert performing "Love You."